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Statement submitted by the International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

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The International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres (IFS), a coalition of national, regional and local non-profit community-based social service organizations in 61 countries, recognizes that women are often disproportionately affected by poverty and social marginalization because they suffer from systemic and systematic discrimination. Women are at risk of experiencing multiple barriers in gaining access to economic and social rights such as employment, housing, land, food and social security. These barriers can arise from the disproportionate burden of reproductive and care-giving work performed by women; discriminatory traditional and cultural laws and practices; unequal representation by women in political and other decision-making structures at all levels; and the widespread violence perpetrated against women.

IFS understands the importance of identifying specific constraints affecting women in the enjoyment of economic and social rights, the need for data that are disaggregated by sex, and an examination of women's patterns of paid work, both the formal and informal sectors. National plans of action should incorporate those types of data collection. IFS believes that it is crucial for non-governmental organizations to be actively involved, along with Governments, in setting realistic targets, monitoring progress and contributing to the implementation of national plans.

IFS welcomes the recommendation of the Division for the Advancement of Women that non-governmental organizations and other organizations and actors of civil society should base their activities on human rights principles. Standards of international human rights instruments should be used by such organizations as a yardstick in all their work. In keeping with that goal IFS strongly supports the additional recommendation that human rights bodies within the United Nations system should encourage and facilitate greater involvement by non-governmental organizations in their work, including the adoption of innovative procedures to enhance such participation. One very good example of this type of inclusion occurred during recent sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, when non-governmental organizations were included in consultations.

IFS welcomes the adoption of optional protocols establishing communications procedures under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and looks forward to their application.

As an international non-governmental organization, IFS understands its responsibility for channelling information from national non-governmental organizations to international human rights bodies and, in turn, passing information from the international level to the national. IFS will facilitate the attendance of national non-governmental organizations at meetings of international human rights bodies.

IFS welcomes the encouragement of non-governmental organizations to submit to human rights treaty bodies "shadow" reports on economic and social rights. Wherever possible IFS will facilitate this type of submission from its members. IFS also welcomes the recommendation that international non-governmental organizations and their national partners should also target international bodies and processes with a significant economic and social rights and gender dimension.

Finally, IFS would be pleased to work in partnership with Governments, development agencies and other funding bodies to strengthen the work of NGOs in the realm of gender and economic and social rights issues.